

## Message Text

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ORIGIN INR-07

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TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT:INTSUM 261 - FEBRUARY 25, 1977

WARNING NOTICE SENSITIVE SOURCES AND METHODS INVOLVED NOT  
RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS--NOT RELEASABLE TO  
CONTRACTORS OR CONTRACTOR/CONSULTANTS.

1. ISRAEL. IN A FURTHER ATTEMPT TO UNIFY THE LABOR  
PARTY IN THE WAKE OF THE RABIN-PERES STRUGGLE FOR THE  
PRIME MINISTERIAL NOMINATION, RABIN REITERATED YESTERDAY  
HIS POSITION THAT PERES WOULD HOLD A "PROMINENT  
POSITION" IN ANY CABINET HE HEADS IN FUTURE. ACCORDING  
TO RABIN, PERES HAS TOLD HIM THAT HE WOULD AGREE TO BE  
A MEMBER OF A NEW RABIN CABINET.

2. RABIN EFFECTIVELY OPENED LABOR'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN  
YESTERDAY DURING A PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH HE  
DISCUSSED LABOR'S PROSPECTS FOR THE MAY ELECTION. AS EX-  
PECTED, HE STRESSED FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES, NOTING THE  
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"TRANQUIL" SITUATION IN THE MIDEAST AND HIS CONTRIBUTION  
TOWARD NEGOTIATION EFFORTS. HE EMPHASIZED THAT "EVERYTHING

WILL BE DONE TO ADVANCE THE PROSPECTS FOR PEACE AND  
NEGOTIATIONS", AND SAID THAT THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN WOULD  
NOT INTERFERE WITH THIS.

3. ISRAELI EX-GENERAL ARIK SHARON ON A VISIT TO THE US, CHARGED YESTERDAY THAT EGYPT WAS IN THE "FINAL STAGES" OF ERECTING 50 MISSILE SITES IN THE SINAI IN VIOLATION OF THE SINAI II PACT. HE ALSO CLAIMED THAT THE EGYPTIAN HAD LAID A LARGE MINEFIELD THERE AND HAD ESTABLISHED FORTIFICATIONS CAPABLE OF HANDLING SEVEN ARMY DIVISIONS. (UNCLASSIFIED)

4. LEBANON. AN ISRAELI ARMY SPOKESMAN SAID YESTERDAY THAT PALESTINIAN GUERRILLAS WERE BUILDING UP THEIR FORCES IN SOUTHERN LEBANON AND THAT, OVER THE PAST FEW DAYS, A 150-MAN UNIT HAD INFILTRATED INTO HASBAYA CLOSE TO THE ISRAELI BORDER. THE ARMY SPOKESMAN ESTIMATED THE TOTAL GUERRILLA STRENGTH WITHIN "14 MILES OF THE BORDER" AT 3,500 MEN, INCLUDING 1,500 IN THE TYRE AREA AND 800 NEAR NABATIYA.

5. CHRISTIANS, APPARENTLY WITH ISRAELI ASSISTANCE, CONTINUE THEIR OFFENSIVE TO SECURE THEIR BORDER BUFFER ZONE. A RELIABLE PALESTINIAN SOURCE REPORTED THAT THE CHRISTIANS ARE SHELLING THE COASTAL TOWN OF NAQOURA, THAT THE CIVILIAN POPULATION HAD FLED, AND THAT THE CHRISTIANS ARE LIKELY TO TAKE THE TOWN SHORTLY. THEIR FORCES ALREADY HAVE CAPTURED THE TOWN OF BALAT NEAR MARJAYOUN.

6. THE LEBANESE CIVILIAN POPULATION SEEMS TO BE SUFFERING AS A RESULT OF THE INCREASED MILITARY ACTIVITY AND THE GROWING PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN THE SOUTH. SHIITE  
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MUSLIMS, PARTICULARLY, ARE REPORTEDLY FLEEING FROM MANY VILLAGES.

7. THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT IS DEEPLY CONCERNED BY THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH. SARKIS REPORTEDLY IS PLANNING TO RAISE THE ISSUE WITH THE ARAB STATES IN CAIRO AT THE ARAB SUMMIT, WHICH IS SCHEDULED TO BE HELD MARCH 6. HE WILL ASK THEM TO JOIN LEBANON IN EXERTING PRESSURE ON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO TAKE STEPS TO CHECK THE DETERIORATING SITUATION. HE REPORTEDLY TOLD PARLIAMENTARY DEPUTIES FROM THE SOUTHERN AREA THAT HE IS AWAITING THE RESULTS OF INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS.

8. SARKIS' POSITION IS PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT BECAUSE HIS GRACE PERIOD IS DRAWING TO A CLOSE AMID MOUNTING CRITICISM OF THE MANNER IN WHICH HE IS HANDLING THE PRESIDENCY. HIS DIFFICULTIES ARE EXACERBATED BY THE GROWING RESENTMENT AMONG THE LEBANESE--BOTH CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS--AND PALESTINIANS TOWARD THE SYRIANS. (SECRET/

NOFORN/NOCONTRACT)

9. EGYPT. PRAVDA'S RECENT EDITORIAL ATTACK ON PRESIDENT SADAT HAS FURTHER INTENSIFIED THE WAR OF WORDS BETWEEN MOSCOW AND CAIRO. IT CONTAINS NO HINT THAT THE USSR INTENDS TO ABANDON ITS WAIT-IT-OUT APPROACH TOWARD EGYPT, BUT WAS PROBABLY INTENDED TO UNDERScore SOVIET SOLIDARITY WITH SADAT'S CRITICS AND TO STEP UP PRESSURE ON HIM.

10. THE EDITORIAL BLAST WAS CLEARLY MEANT TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT MOSCOW'S PATIENCE WITH SADAT HAS FINALLY COME TO AN END AND THAT IT HAS WRITTEN HIM OFF AS A MAN WITH WHOM THE KREMLIN CAN WORK. NEVERTHELESS, THERE WAS NO SUGGESTION THAT THE USSR WILL NOW TAKE ANY STEPS OF ITS OWN TO WEAKEN SOVIET-EGYPTIAN TIES FURTHER. IN FACT, THE ARTICLE LEFT THE DOOR TO IMPROVED RELATIONS OPEN BY REAFFIRMING SOVIET SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT  
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OF "EQUAL AND FRIENDLY TIES" WITH CAIRO. CONSISTENT WITH PAST PRONOUNCEMENTS, HOWEVER, PRAVDA LEFT NO DOUBT THAT EGYPT WOULD HAVE TO TAKE THE FIRST STEP.

11. THE UNSIGNED "EDITORIAL-ARTICLE" (RELATIVELY HIGH ON THE SOVIET SCALE OF AUTHORITY) IS THE STRONGEST PERSONAL ATTACK ON THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT TO APPEAR IN THE SOVIET MEDIA SO FAR. IT BLAMED SADAT PERSONALLY FOR THE DETERIORATION IN SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS SINCE NASSER AND CHARGED THAT THE PUBLICATION OF HIS "MEMOIRS" REPRESENTED A PREMEDITATED ATTEMPT TO DRIVE THE RELATIONSHIP EVEN FURTHER INTO THE GROUND. THE KREMLIN HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY ANGERED BY SADAT'S "ANTI-COMMUNIST CRUSADE" SINCE THE CAIRO RIOTS LAST MONTH.

12. FOR THEIR PART, THE EGYPTIANS HAVE ALREADY INDICATED THAT CAIRO WILL MAKE NO GESTURES SOON. AN AHRAH EDITORIAL ON FEBRUARY 23 RESPONDED IN KIND TO PRAVDA, CHARGING MOSCOW WITH MOUNTING A MEDIA CAMPAIGN OF LIES AND FABRICATIONS IN AN ATTEMPT TO DEFAME EGYPT AND ALL BUT ACCUSING THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP OF COWARDICE FOR RELYING ON AN "ANONYMOUS" EDITORIAL TO SPELL OUT MOSCOW'S POSITION.

13. ACCORDING TO THE EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR IN AMMAN, ONCE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS GET UNDERWAY, THE EGYPTIANS WILL RESIST EFFORTS TO GO BEYOND "GUARANTEES OF STABILITY" IN THE MIDEAST, SUCH AS PROPOSALS FOR DEMILITARIZATION ON BOTH SIDES AND FOR THE PRESENCE OF UN FORCES. HE ALSO NOTED THAT THE SOVIETS HAD BEEN QUITE NEGATIVE ON THE EGYPTIAN PROPOSAL TO INCLUDE FRANCE, WEST GERMANY, INDIA,

AND YUGOSLAVIA IN THE GENEVA CONFERENCE (THIS IS THE FIRST REPORT THAT EGYPT WOULD LIKE INDIAN AND YUGOSLAVIAN PARTICIPATION). HE SAID THAT THE FRENCH HAD REALISTICALLY CONCLUDED THAT THEIR PARTICIPATION WAS MOST LIKELY NOT POSSIBLE, GIVEN ISRAELI OPPOSITION TO THIS.

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(CONFIDENTIAL)

14. SYRIA. EMBASSY DAMASCUS COMMENTED THAT THE RECENT ASSASSINATION OF DAMASCUS UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT AL-FADIL (AN ALAWITE) MAY FURTHER EXACERBATE SECTARIAN TENSIONS WITHIN SYRIA. SOME SUNNIS ALREADY FEAR THAT A STRONG ALAWITE COUNTER-REACTION MAY MATERIALIZE THAT COULD INCLUDE INCREASINGLY REPRESSIVE SECURITY MEASURES IF EVIDENCE LINKS DISSIDENT SUNNIS TO HIS MURDER. THE EMBASSY THINKS THAT IT IS LIKELY PRESSURE WILL INCREASE ON ASAD TO FURTHER PROTECT THE ALAWITE COMMUNITY.

(CONFIDENTIAL)

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